

NOTES FROM THE MOUNTAIN TOP – WHERE WE GO FROM HERE IS UP TO US

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Tree breeding programs are a challenge for landowners, foresters, citizens, and politicians to understand and to fund. Tree improvement is relatively easy to justify when there is short-term economic benefit. For long-term benefits that might include sustaining/enhancement of forest health or ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, support for tree improvement is often a challenge. Long-term management of our natural resources is not a high priority for many citizens, so tree improvement like most forest management issues is not a high priority. How we raise the profile of our work is up to us, but success breeds success. As a community, we must highlight our successes and the benefits that we bring. Again, this is relatively straightforward for programs that yield short-term financial returns. For threatened or endangered species or sustaining long-term forest health under changing climates, success stories are more of a challenge. While politicking is not normally in most tree breeding job descriptions, gaining political support for our work will be key for our success.